



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2-10 Mtn. Public Affairs)

New PX at Striker

Pfc. Adriane Guy (right), a 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), smiles as he hands Mohammed Imam items to scan at the new Post Exchange on Camp Striker. Guy was one of the first Soldiers to shop at the new exchange during its grand opening on the Baghdad camp Feb. 1. See story page 2.

Baghdad in Brief

Tax Assistance Center opens on Camp Liberty



(Photo by Pfc. William Hatton, 7th MPAD)

(Left to right) Maj. Gregory Simmons, Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, Capt. Rob Michaels, and Sgt. Tommie Padgett unveil a sign for the newly built Camp Liberty Tax Assistance Center Feb. 1 at the Baghdad base camp. The Tax Assistance Center gives deployed Soldiers the opportunity to file their taxes correctly while they are here.

IA, Mountain Soldiers find largest cache in Commando Brigade history

2-10 Mtn. Public Affairs

YUSUFIYAH, Iraq - Iraqi Army and Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers uncovered more than 1,100 81mm high-explosive mortar rounds at a cache near the main highway, Route Tampa, leading into the Iraqi capital Feb. 3.

Troops from 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division and Troop B, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment "Wolverines," 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, made the discovery during Operation Wolverine Alesia near Yusufiyah, Iraq, just 10 miles southwest of the capital. 1,129

Acting on a tip from a local resident,

the troops conducted an intentional search of the area which resulted in the largest cache find in 2nd "Commando" Brigade's history. In all, 1,129 mortar rounds were uncovered.

The cache, which was buried in the dirt, was larger than expected. As the Soldiers continued to unearth more mortar rounds, it became evident that this was a major find.

"These mortars rounds are in the configuration to use as improvised explosive devises," said Lt. Col. Mark Suich, the 1-89th's commander and native of Redding, Pa. "The mortar rounds in this state cannot be used for indirect fire; they are fabricated and stored to be used against the coali-

tion and sectarian enemies as IEDs."

Suich said the seizure of so many munitions can only hurt terrorist operations. "We put a significant reduction in the enemy's ability to emplace IEDs in this area today," Suich said. "We are pretty sure that these are affiliated with al Qaeda in Iraq."

The area around Yusufiyah has long been identified as an al-Qaeda and former regime safe haven where attacks against Baghdad and coalition and Iraqi security forces originated.

"This is what we refer to as a weapons

See Cache Page 3

Camp Striker gets new Post Exchange

By Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie
2-10 Mtn. Public Affairs

CAMP STRIKER, Iraq - For Soldiers here, shopping in small trailers has come to an end.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2-10 Mtn. Public Affairs)

Sgt. Robert Young (right), with HHC, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div., shows Sgt. Tuyen Nguyen (left), also with HHC, an item he is thinking about buying from the new Post Exchange.

Soldiers from this Baghdad base camp lined up for the chance to shop in the new Post Exchange here Feb. 1.

The exchange, larger than the size of a convenience store, was opened to accommodate the needs of the Soldiers who live and visit Camp Striker, since it is a transient post.

"The new exchange has a lot more space than the old one," said Pfc. Justin Bascom, a truck driver with the 210th Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) and native of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. "It is nice to be able to shop in a space larger than a trailer."

The new exchange has more amenities than the old one.

Some of the amenities included more shelves to stock items and more cash registers.

"The lines are a lot quicker since there are more registers," said Pfc. Adriane Guy, a 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (LI) human resources specialist from Houston. "It is nice that we are able to shop in an area larger than a trailer. I think all of the Soldiers will enjoy shopping at the PX."



The exchange is stocked with a variety of hygiene items, military clothes, and

food. Employees like the new facility too.

"The new store is nice," said Mohammad Imram, a cashier. "I like to help the Soldiers."

"Having the new PX is a morale booster for the Soldiers," said Sgt. Aubrey Weaver, a quality assurance and control inspector with the 210th BSB and native of Anderson, Ind., as he looked at different brands of hygiene items.

The Camp Striker PX is open daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

**OPERATION IRAQI
FREEDOM**

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

If each letter of the alphabet, a through z, is equal to a number 1 to 26

Then,

K + N + O + W + L + E + D + G + E
 $11 + 14 + 15 + 23 + 12 + 5 + 4 + 7 + 5 = 96\%$

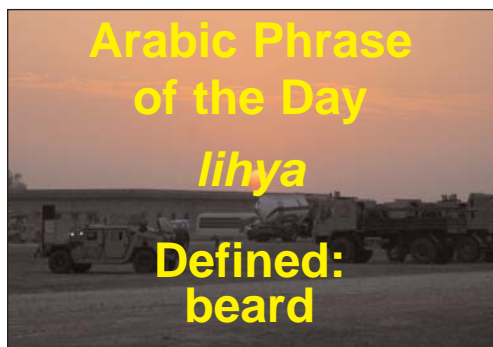
H + A + R + D + W + O + R + K
 $8 + 1 + 18 + 4 + 23 + 15 + 18 + 11 = 98\%$

Both are important, but the total falls just short of 100%.




However,

A + T + T + I + T + U + D + E
 $1 + 20 + 20 + 9 + 20 + 21 + 4 + 5 = 100\%$

Safety really is about attitude



Iraq 3-Day Weather Report

Today	Tomorrow	Wednesday
High: 63 Low: 48	High: 59 Low: 46	High: 59 Low: 37

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More than 1,100 mortar rounds found

Cache

From Page 1

supermarket-type cache," said Maj. Mark Aitken, the 1-89th executive officer and a naturalized U.S. citizen from Leicester, England. "The terrorists place a large cache of weapons in one place to draw from. They then pre-position what they draw in many other smaller caches around the countryside."

During the operation four individuals were detained by the Iraqi Army for suspicious activity in the vicinity of the cache.

At a second cache site located nearby, Troop C, 1-89th found 20 120mm mortar rounds, 26 81mm mortar rounds, four medium machine guns, 8,000 rounds of machine gun ammunition, three rifle scopes, 60 fragmentation hand grenades, 50 pounds of homemade explosives, 27 boxes of 5.56mm rifle ammunition and 10 rocket-propelled grenade projectiles.

Operation Wolverine Alesia is a joint operation designed to deny terrorist sanctu-

ary along Route Tampa, the military designation for Iraqi Highway One, leading into Baghdad from the south. The operation began Feb. 3 and is ongoing.

The operation is named after a Roman battle led by Julius Caesar against the Gauls in 52 B.C., where the conquering force surrounded the enemy at the fortifications of Alesia in modern-day eastern France and defeated the defenders through siege warfare. The battle of Alesia marked the turning point in the Gallic Wars.

"Today we took over 1,100 IEDs off of the streets of Baghdad," said Maj. Web Wright, spokesman for the Commando Brigade and a native of Annapolis, Md. "Not only did we take these weapons off of the streets, 3-4-6 IA is fully integrated into this operation. Last night, they found three caches and were actively involved in finding these two."

The mortar rounds were destroyed during a controlled detonation by the explosive ordnance disposal detachment at approximately 2:35 p.m. The blast could be

heard for more than 20 miles.

The four suspects detained are being held for questioning.



(U.S. Army photo)

More than 1100 mortar rounds were found by Soldiers of the 1st Bn., 89th Cav. Regt., 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (Light Infantry) along Route Tampa, just 10 miles southwest of Baghdad Feb. 3.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2-10 Mtn. Public Affairs)

Heroes!

(From left) Pfc. Romin Gallup, a sniper with HHC, 2nd Bn., 14th Inf. Regt., 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. (Light Infantry), Sgt. Matthew Herring, a sniper team leader with HHC, 2-14, and Spc. Thomas Mackey, an infantryman also with HHC, receive Army Commendation Medals with "V" Devices at an awards ceremony on Camp Striker, Iraq Jan. 29. Each of the Soldiers was awarded the medal for heroic acts.

Couple shares reenlistment 'vows'

By Sgt. Jon Cupp
1-1 Cav. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- Justin and Karla Thomsen do just about everything together - even go to war. So, it was no surprise that the two 1st Cavalry Division noncommissioned officers reenlisted together here Jan. 25.

Staff Sgt. Joshua Thomsen is a chemical operations specialist with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment from Oxnard, Calif. His wife, Sgt. Karla Thomsen, is a joint network node operator for Co. B, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion and a native of Franklin, Wis. The pair raised their right hands together, reenlisting for another six years, at the 1st "Ironhorse" Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division retention office.

Back home in the states or while deployed, the couple said they're attached at the hip doing most things together - so reenlisting together wasn't too much of a stretch.

"This isn't really that unusual for us, we decided to do this because we like to do everything together as a family," said Karla. "I feel like today, we've accomplished something that will help us build our future."

"The First Team (1st Cav. Div.), as well as our brigade, has really taken care of us," said Joshua. "They do a great job of helping families, especially dual military families, so we figured we would pay them back by staying on the team."

Joshua and Karla both said they like the security that a career in the Army offers.

The husband and wife pair netted \$30,000 in cash tax free for reenlisting while deployed to Iraq in the form of two separate \$15,000 reenlistment bonuses.

"We want to pay off some money on our house as well as invest some of it," said Karla.

Along with their bonus, the couple accepted a III Corps incentive which allows Soldiers to attend 12 semester hours of college during duty hours.

"We'll both attend school together and

I'm pretty close to having an associate's degree and I'll eventually go for my bachelors," said Karla who will major in computer networking and engineering. Joshua plans on working toward a degree in environmental engineering.

When they first entered military service about six years ago, Karla and Joshua said they would have never dreamed of marrying a fellow Soldier and they may not have thought much about reenlisting either.

That all changed, however, in 2004 when the two met while unchaining military vehicles at a railhead at the National Training Center on Fort Irwin, Calif.

"We saw stars," said Karla when they first saw each other.

The couple is now on their second rotation together in Iraq, having also served in 2004-2005 during Operation Iraqi Freedom II at Camp Cuervo, Iraq.

"At that time, they didn't let married couples live together," Joshua said. "We're fortunate to be able to live together on Taji. A lot of other Soldiers have to wait six months to see their loved ones, and I have

the person I value the most here with me."

"We feel privileged," said Karla.

Having only recently bought a home in Killeen, Texas, the Thomsens reenlisted for the stabilization option which will allow them to stay at their current duty station-Fort Hood, Texas. Originally, they had planned on taking an overseas duty tour to Japan but they didn't want to leave the Killeen area, their house and their German Shepherd.

"The city of Austin is close and we like the cost of living," said Joshua.

"Although Japan would be nice, we couldn't have brought the dog and then, we would have had to have sold our house and we're also thinking about starting a family once we get back," said Karla, adding that she likes the feeling of being settled and doesn't want to move back and forth to other duty stations.

Once the couple returns home, they said they plan on taking a vacation either to some place tropical or to Las Vegas where they own a time share condominium.



(Photo by Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Husband and wife team Staff Sgt. Joshua Thomsen, a chemical operations specialist with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment from Oxnard, Calif., and Sgt. Karla Thomsen, a joint network node operator for Co. B, 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion from Franklin, Wis., reenlisted Jan. 25 on Camp Taji, Iraq as Buffalo, N.Y. native, Capt. Edward Kendall, company commander, Co. B, 1BSTB, read the oath of enlistment.

Songs soothe Soldiers in combat zone

By Spc. Courtney Marulli
2-2 Inf. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RUSTAMIYAH, Iraq - In the Army, vocal chords sometimes seem to be something junior enlisted are discouraged from using, but that's not always the case.

One Soldier in Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, uses her vocal talent to entertain friends and to express herself through song.

Pfc. Valerie A. Strand, of Selma, Ore., a truck driver, has been singing since childhood and continues to share her vocal talent with the world. Her mother, who sang her whole life but never had the chance to make it big, allowed Strand's talents to shine.

Those talents shone when Strand first began to talk. Instead of saying the usual "Dada" or "Mama", Strand was singing.

"My first song was Rubber Ducky," she said of her childhood performance captured on tape.

Strand and her mother are close, and have always bonded through music.

"She sang Stevie Nicks to me," Strand recalled. Her mother had a little studio from which she would record back-up vocals for karaoke. Strand said she would

ask her mother to go sing in the studio. "Mom kept it because she knew how important it is to me," Strand said.

Both mother and daughter recorded backup vocals and cherished the moments together, making music in the little studio.

"I love singing to my Mom because she cries when I sing to her," she said.

Aside from her mother, Strand's musical inspirations growing up were Amy Grant and Wilson Phillips. Her current inspiration is Jo Dee Messina.

Strand has continued her love of music and also uses it as a form of self-expression.

"What I feel about singing is like a

way to express my emotions," she said. "I don't have to say anything, just sing."

That expression has helped Strand during hard times, such as being deployed to Iraq and when she's missing her loved ones.

"All of that energy comes out and you just sound so good," she said.

"I love to be onstage performing," she said. "I think it's all the energy around me. People are there for you."

"I've never done it for money or fame but to make people happy," she said. Her friends are a large support group who are constantly encouraging her to try out for American Idol. Strand, who has not had any formal vocal training, said she promised all of her friends she would try out for the popular American television show.

"Before the Army, I could never go to American Idol because I was in job corps and school." After her year tour in Iraq is over, Strand plans on trying out and seeing where that may lead.

The fame from a singing career isn't what drives Strand.

"Fame isn't anything for me," she said. "If I got famous at this very moment, I would still drive my truck in the war because I feel I have an obligation to fulfill, a team to serve. I can't let my team down. We've come so far, I just can't split out now."



(Photo by Spc. Courtney Marulli, 2-2 Inf. Public Affairs)

Pfc. Valerie Strand, a truck driver with HHC, 2nd BSB, 2nd BCT, 2nd Inf. Div., entertains her fellow Soldiers with her vocal abilities.

TELEVISION



	8:00p.m.	8:30p.m.	9:00p.m.	9:30p.m.	10:00p.m.	10:30p.m.	11:00p.m.
AFN sports	NFL		NFL Super Bowl: Colts Vs. Bears				
AFN prime ATLANTIC	Headline News	ATS/Regional News	48 Hours Mystery		Extreme Makeover: Home Edition		Nanny 911
AFN news	MSNBC Live		MSNBC Live		Fox News Live		Studio B